

Brenda Morgun

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Merced, CA 95340

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May 7, 2025

Merced City Council
City of Merced
678 W. 18th Street
Merced, CA 95340

Subject: Formal Appeal of Planning Commission's Decision
Regarding Agenda Item 25-0006 and Environmental Review
25-0002

Dear Members of the City Council,

I am writing to formally appeal the decision made by the Merced Planning Commission on May 7, 2025, regarding Agenda Item 25-0006 and Environmental Review 25-0002. As a concerned resident of the area surrounding Rahilly Park (APN 006-150-002), I believe that the Planning Commission did not fully consider the serious concerns raised by our community about the proposed construction of the wall and tower.
Disregard for Community Impact

Our concerns about the direct impact of this project on our lives, health, property values, and safety were overlooked by the Planning Commission. Throughout the hearing, the Commission seemed more focused on finalizing the lease they were drafting and discussing the color of the wall, rather than addressing the broader and far more critical issues that affect the well-being of our neighborhood. Specifically, the potential environmental impacts and the loss of habitat for protected species in Rahilly Park were not adequately discussed, despite the fragile nature of the local ecosystem and the legal protections for these species.
Environmental Concerns and Habitat Loss

The construction of the wall and tower is likely to disrupt or destroy vital habitats for protected species within Rahilly Park. We believe the Planning Commission did not give proper attention to these environmental implications. We respectfully urge the City Council to ensure that a thorough environmental review is conducted, with a specific focus on the potential harm to local wildlife and ecosystems, especially considering that Black Rascal Creek runs through the park.

Safety Risks and Increased Criminal Activity

We are deeply concerned about the safety risks posed by the proposed project. The proposed wall and tower will be constructed less than 180 feet from our homes, which raises significant fears regarding the potential for increased criminal activity. The tower could serve as a hiding place or platform for illegal activities, directly threatening the safety and security of the surrounding homes. The close proximity of this structure to residential areas increases these risks, and we believe these concerns were not sufficiently addressed during the Planning Commission's review.

Misleading Information About Rahilly Park

During the Planning Commission meeting, Rahilly Park was repeatedly referred to as a "community park." However, Rahilly Park is actually a neighborhood park, not a community park. This distinction is important because it underscores the impact of the proposed project on a smaller, more vulnerable residential area. Additionally, there is a discrepancy on the city's website, which inaccurately lists Rahilly Park as being 28 acres in size. This figure includes the bike path that runs east to west, but the main part of the park is only about 3 acres, most of which is covered by water due to the presence of Black Rascal Creek. This smaller park area further amplifies the potential negative impacts of the proposed development.

No Other Parks in Merced Have Cell Towers

It is also important to note, as stated by Chris Jensen, the

Parks and Recreation Department director, that no other parks in Merced currently have a cell tower. This sets a concerning precedent, especially given the close proximity of Rahilly Park to residential homes. We question why Rahilly Park was chosen for this installation, particularly when it presents unique challenges to both the community and the environment.

Impact on Property Values

The construction of the proposed cell tower in Rahilly Park will likely have a significant negative effect on property values in the surrounding area. As Rahilly Park is zoned Low Density Residential, the proximity of a commercial structure like a cell tower will decrease the desirability of homes nearby, leading to a drop in property values. Homeowners who have invested in this neighborhood based on its peaceful, residential character would suffer financial losses as a result of this intrusive development. The Planning Commission failed to adequately address the potential economic consequences for the residents of this community, who are likely to see their investments devalued.

Alternative Sites Suggested by the Community

In our efforts to protect the safety and well-being of our community, we proposed several alternative locations for the cell tower. These alternative sites were carefully selected to minimize both environmental and safety risks. Notably, the proposed locations are either more industrially zoned or commercially designated areas—several of which were included in the applicant's own alternate site packet when they initially submitted their application. These areas offer a better fit for such a development, reducing the impact on our residential neighborhood and the surrounding ecosystem. Regrettably, we believe these alternatives were not given adequate consideration during the Planning Commission's review. We strongly urge the City Council to re-evaluate these proposed sites as part of a more thorough and balanced review process.

In light of the above concerns, we respectfully request that

the Merced City Council:

Allow us the opportunity to present our appeal at the upcoming City Council meeting to address these critical concerns in person.

Suspend any further action on the proposed project until a comprehensive and transparent review of the environmental and safety risks can be conducted.

Reevaluate the proposed site for the tower and consider alternative locations that would better serve the intended purpose without negatively impacting our community and the environment.

As residents of this area, we seek only to protect the health, safety, and future prosperity of our community. We trust that the City Council will give thoughtful consideration to our concerns and take appropriate action to safeguard the interests of the people of Merced.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response and the opportunity for further dialogue.

Sincerely,
Brenda Morgun
Resident of Merced